

Research Challenges in Inter-Vehicular Communication – Lessons of the 2010 Dagstuhl Seminar

Falko Dressler*, Frank Kargl†, Jörg Ott‡, Ozan K. Tonguz§, Lars Wischhof¶

*Institute of Computer Science, University of Innsbruck, Austria

†Distributed and Embedded Security Research Group, University of Twente, Netherlands

‡Dept. of Communications and Networking, Aalto University, Finland

§Electrical and Computer Engineering Dept., Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

¶Audi Electronics Venture GmbH, Germany

Abstract—Inter-Vehicle Communication (IVC) has become an extremely hot topic in network research, opening up new research challenges well beyond those of classical Mobile Ad Hoc Network (MANET) research. In October 2010, a Dagstuhl seminar has been organized bringing together many of the internationally leading experts in this field to discuss open issues and challenges related to IVC. This article reports the main findings of this meeting, that was set up to cover a wide range of topics. In particular, the following four areas were studied in working groups: Fundamental Limits and Opportunities of IVC, IVC Communication Principles and Patterns, Security and Privacy in IVC, and IVC Simulation and Modeling. A general conclusion drawn is that IVC is now at a turning point where the first generation systems are engineered and will soon be brought to market while, at the same time, IVC is experiencing the beginning of a new era characterized by a more fundamental research approach.

I. INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

The management and control of network connections among vehicles and between vehicles and an existing network infrastructure is currently one of the most challenging research fields in the networking domain. In terms of Vehicular Ad Hoc Network (VANET), Inter-Vehicle Communication (IVC), Car-2-X (C2X), or Vehicle-2-X (V2X), many interesting and challenging applications have been envisioned and (at least partially) realized. In this context, a very active research field has developed.

However, over the past few years, many researchers active in the field of IVC started to ask themselves whether IVC is still a fertile field for basic and applied research or if it became a matter of industrial engineering (i.e., development). Looking at research projects worldwide, it seemed that the focus was clearly shifting towards leveraging the many research results to finally produce industrial products to be built into cars.

This motivated our idea to reconsider the topic from a research perspective, assessing what has been achieved and – perhaps even more importantly – to discuss and identify where we have failed to provide sufficient answers yet. This approach should enable us to identify whether the discipline still provides important and yet unsolved challenges for basic and applied research and what those would be. By bringing

leading researchers from around the world together and providing them with the right setting (and as few disturbance by email or other blessings of our modern world as possible), we hoped to be able to trigger this process.

In 2010, the authors of this paper gathered around the idea of organizing such a meeting to discuss the future of IVC. In contrast to the many IVC-related conferences and workshops, the goal of this meeting was not to present research papers or to outline the bright commercial future of this topic, but to broadly discuss open challenges and new research directions.

In the “Schloss Dagstuhl - Leibniz Center for Informatics” we found the perfect venue for this type of event. Dagstuhl offers modern facilities with a world-class computer science library and all modern amenities embedded into a historic building surrounded by a lovely countryside. Many meeting rooms of all sizes allows smaller ad-hoc groups to retreat for discussions, a famous wine-cellar provides the perfect location for after-hour discussions, all complemented, for example, by a sauna, pool-billiard, or free bicycles.

But what gives a Dagstuhl seminar its unique character, quite different from other scientific events? In general, organizers are requested to plan with only a minimum number of presentations but to maximize interactivity. In our case, we asked the invited researchers beforehand to submit ideas they wanted to discuss and performed a poll to see the interest in the various topics. From the results, we identified four working group topics and organized one invited talk per working group to provide initial stimulus for discussions. The remainder of the time was to be used for discussions and group work.

This article reports on the key outcomes of the Dagstuhl seminar on Inter-Vehicle Communication that took place from October 3rd to October 6th, 2010.

II. IVC AS WE SEE IT TODAY

While there are some similarities to research fields such as mobile ad-hoc networks or wireless sensor networks, the specific characteristics of vehicular networks require different communication paradigms, different approaches to security and privacy, and different wireless communication systems. For example, the nodes usually do not have severe power

and form factor constraints, and they might be always on. On the other hand, due to high relative speeds, wireless connections may not be stable for a longer time period and the network density is expected to vary from sparse to very dense networks [1].

Another challenging issue is the efficient use of available infrastructure, such as road side units or even cellular networks. Furthermore, IVC has strong links to other research domains, e.g., to geo-informatics – as it requires very precise localization and precise maps – or to highly scalable simulations that are a requirement for analyzing traffic systems with hundreds or thousands of vehicles.

In the past years, many specific solutions for IVC have been designed and, at the time of writing, industry and other stakeholders are already calling for standardization. Nevertheless, we believe that many important research questions have only partially been answered and that the approaches discussed in the standardization bodies are based only on a minimum consensus of simplest solutions. Security and privacy, scalability, use of advanced communication patterns like aggregation [2], transmit power control, and optimal medium access are just a few of such issues.

The main goal of this seminar was to bring together leading researchers both from academia and industry to discuss and evaluate the state of the art and to highlight where sufficient solutions exist today, where better alternatives need to be found, and also to give directions on where to look for such alternatives. Furthermore, one of our goals was to go one step beyond and identify where IVC can contribute to the basic foundations of computer science or where previously unconsidered foundations can contribute to IVC.

For example, IVC has triggered active research on reactive and dynamic security systems that do not try to provide security in a cryptographic sense at usually high costs, but create a tunable security-performance trade-off using reputation and consistency-checking mechanisms that are not unlike human and social mechanisms to estimate trust in information. It remains to be seen if such mechanisms can be generalized and be applied to other forms of networks that will be similarly dynamic and self-organizing in nature.

We organized four working groups on some of the most challenging issues in Inter-Vehicle Communication:

- *Fundamental Limits of IVC* – The leading question of this working groups was, whether we can identify fundamental laws or limits that let us determine what IVC might achieve and what is not achievable using this kind of systems.
- *IVC Communication Principles and Patterns* – This working group reviewed the current state of the art of communication patterns and principles in IVC systems.
- *Security and Privacy in IVC* – The focus of this working group was on topics related to security and privacy protection in IVC.
- *IVC Simulation and Modeling* – This working group focused on simulation-based evaluation of IVC and the necessary models.

The work on these topic was organized around daily topics: Day one should leave the room for an introduction and a

subsequent discussion on the current state of the art. On day two, the groups aimed at investigating specific challenges and discussed how a “VANET 2.0” would look like if those challenges were overcome. On day three, the goal was finally to identify a roadmap how to get to this vision. The invited talks were scheduled on days one and two, each day ended with a plenary where the individual working group results were presented and discussed. On the final day, there was also room for short ad-hoc talks to present recent ideas and current work.

III. FUNDAMENTAL LIMITS OF IVC

This working group discussed whether communication theory, networking, and computer science could make fundamental statements about what IVC will be able to accomplish and where its limits are. Hannes Hartenstein from the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology highlighted this in his invited talk: looking at safety and traffic efficiency applications, he raised the key questions *How many accidents and injured or killed people can be prevented by IVC?* and *How much travel time and pollution can be saved when introducing IVC?*

Examples for this are a studies by Haas et al. on traffic safety [3] and by Tielert et al. on carbon emission [4]. While these studies provide useful and valid data and show that IVC will have an impact, they do not answer the question: Is this the best we can get? Our assumption is that even a “perfect” IVC system will only have a limited effect on this. But have we reached these limits yet? Or can computer science at least help to identify where those limits are? Hartenstein pointed out that to approach this topic, various issues need to be addressed, e.g., taking driver behavior and the effect of IVC in car maneuvering into account. We also need to identify what “optimal traffic” would be and how to quantify it. Do we mean optimal traffic for the average or for individual drivers? Today, usually only one application per time is studied. How would many applications running in parallel influence each other’s performance?

Answering such fundamental questions creates a strong need for a new kind of information theory in the area of IVC. A good example is the recent work by Scheuermann et al. who proved a fundamental limit for data aggregation in IVC [5]. Likewise, a control theory for distributed, cooperative systems is yet to be developed. And even then, we still may be failed by our assumptions as disruptive technologies like full-duplex radios [6] or surprising solutions to the hidden-terminal problem might push the limits to areas that we previously considered inaccessible.

The working group took up this input and started to work on a roadmap for a theoretical foundation of inter-vehicle communication. They pointed out inherent trade-offs between safety and efficiency in IVC-supported road traffic. These goals are not independent: for example, all accidents could be avoided if all cars came to a full standstill – this, though, is not efficient in terms of travel time. The working group therefore started to explore the “solution space” of IVC systems regarding safety on the one hand and efficiency on the other hand, and to narrow it down by identifying infeasible regions.

The aim of such an approach would be to establish “upper bounds” on what IVC systems can possibly achieve with respect to both safety and efficiency gains under a given set of assumptions. The intuition is that a given IVC system is provably “good” if it comes close to such a bound.

To this end, the working group proposed to move from highly idealized and abstract models of IVC stepwise towards considerations that take more and more aspects into account. In practice, such an approach might start with assuming that each vehicle always has perfect and up-to-date knowledge about all other entities in the system. One would then have to establish what, under these assumptions, can possibly be achieved in terms of safety and traffic efficiency. Taking, e.g., information-theoretic or control-theoretic limits into account would further narrow down the feasible region. If proposed applications and protocols come close to thereby established limits, this shows that they make full use of IVC’s potential. Finally, it would also be interesting to compare IVC benefits to what can possibly be achieved with non-cooperative technologies that only rely on local sensors, as this might provide a rigorous justification for the use of communication technology in road traffic.

IV. INTER-VEHICLE COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES AND PATTERNS

Ozan K. Tonguz from Carnegie Mellon University introduced the topic of Inter-vehicle Communication Principles and Patterns in his invited talk, where he pointed out the relation between the characteristics of the communication system and propagation models on the one hand and the profound effect this has on performance metrics of IVC applications on the other hand, e.g. penetration, distance, or end-to-end delay [7], [8]. As a conclusion, he stressed the importance of cross-layer design in IVC.

In the second part of his talk, Tonguz discussed emerging IVC applications such as safety, traffic information systems, and entertainment and the underlying communications principles and paradigms. In particular, he elaborated on how vehicle-to-vehicle (V2V) communications can be used as a major enabler for ubiquitous traffic control [9]. This self-organized traffic control paradigm co-invented by Tonguz and Ferreira and their students in 2009 can increase traffic flows in urban areas by about 60% during rush hours which seems pretty significant as such an improvement translates into mitigating congestion, reducing the commute time of workers during rush hours, lessen the carbon footprint of cars, support a greener environment, and increase productivity. He suggested that such colossal benefits may be harvested in the next 10 years, thanks to V2V communications. In realizing such huge benefits, the adoption of DSRC technology by different governments (and Departments of Transportation) will clearly play a major role and Tonguz highlighted the significant role of public policy decisions and new legislation in different countries in accelerating this process.

The working group discussions started with a review of the state-of-the-art of different communication technologies like cellular (LTE, LTE-A) and DSRC (IEEE 802.11p) which can

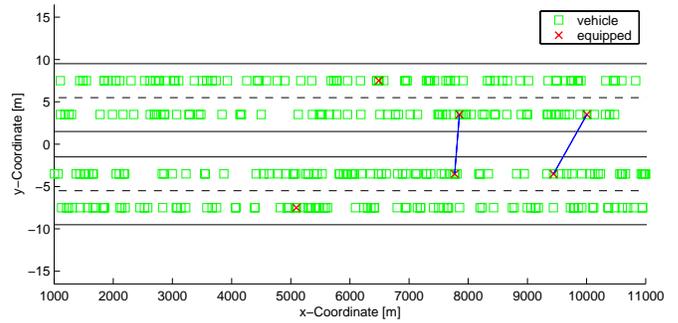


Fig. 1. Sparse communication scenario ($p=0.02$, transmission range 1 km)

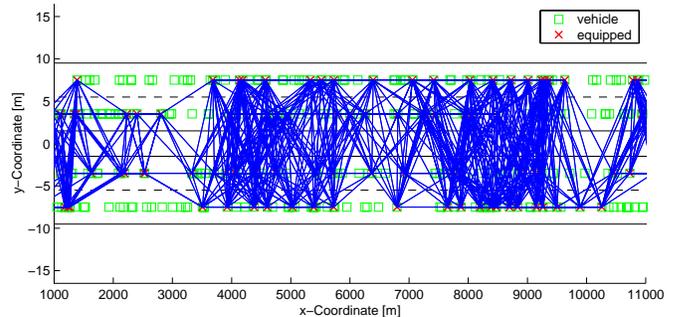


Fig. 2. Dense communication scenario ($p=0.30$, transmission range 1 km)

be applied in IVC scenarios. An important conclusion was that, in the future, cellular and ad-hoc communication technologies for IVC might be viewed as *complementary technologies* instead of competing ones. A major research challenge is therefore the design of communication systems and protocols which can combine both forms of communication in an intelligent way – transparent to IVC applications.

The participants also discussed the important role of 1-hop broadcast in IVC and that neither of the current technologies was designed primarily for this purpose. The communication conditions in IVC networks are extremely challenging, in particular due to the rapidly changing nature of the network with increasing penetration of IVC technologies. In sparse communication scenarios, as shown in Figure 1, vehicles can in most cases only communicate via 1-hop broadcast with vehicles driving in the opposite direction. Therefore, a communication pattern making use of the carriage of data aboard a driving vehicle as one element of forwarding is required [10]. In contrast, a dense communication scenario, as shown in Figure 2, allows the forwarding of data along multiple hops directly via the wireless link. Therefore, adaptive schemes are needed to overcome this gap. There is a lot of potential for enhancement in developing 1-hop broadcasting or beaconing schemes for IVC in highly dynamic environments, a good example being the Adaptive Beacon Protocol (ATB) [7].

Since IVC deployment will take several years until a significant market penetration is achieved, initial deployment should focus on simple applications which can be deployed fast. This implies that they can cope with sparse communication scenarios and use simple, delay-tolerant data dissemination

schemes. Furthermore - although IVC has advantages for localized solutions and services - in the initial deployment phase cellular technologies such as LTE can be used to overcome situations where no vehicle equipped with DSRC radios is within the transmission range.

While current research discusses IVC mostly in the context of vehicle-to-vehicle communications, it might be beneficial to look at larger systems involving trucks, buses, cyclists, pedestrians, or even animals. Combining different communications technologies from WiMAX to RFID will inevitably lead to highly heterogeneous networks with a broad range of communication types. How to handle such a heterogeneous network environment appears to be an important and open research problem.

Finally, there is also a strong interrelation between applications and the forms of communications and advancement in one field will always trigger new developments on the other side. However, the key driver should be the applications, as only they will in the end provide a benefit for the drivers or passengers.

V. SECURITY AND PRIVACY

Security and privacy protection are still considered to be among the major challenges for Inter-Vehicle Communication. While significant work has been done in this area over the past years, the very nature of IVC makes it extremely challenging to come up with a satisfying security and privacy solution. The goal of the security and privacy working group was to provide a judgment on the status of various security and privacy related issues and to discuss some solutions for still-open questions.

Initial discussions in the working group were based on issues raised by Elmar Schoch from Volkswagen in his invited talk. He stressed that for security and privacy-protection, it is essential that we find the right level of protection. If we overdo security, this might negatively affect application performance and reduce IVC benefits in general. If the security or privacy protection provided is too low, the security or privacy incidents that will occur will likely result in a reduced trust of drivers in IVC systems and might thus severely damage deployment. From a manufacturer's point of view, cost also plays a very important role.

The discussion also touched upon the status of current security mechanisms and whether they are ready and sufficient for an initial IVC deployment. To answer this question, the participants created an overview map of research topics and issues shown in Figure 3.

The topics are grouped into the main IVC security domains *ID Management and Message Authentication*, *Privacy Protection*, *Data Consistency*, and *In-Vehicle Security*. The topics within these categories are not meant to be exhaustive but should give a broad overview over various issues that are covered in the literature and that are discussed at scientific conferences and in standardization bodies. Topics are marked in green if a number of proposals are available in the literature and there is a general agreement among researchers and in standardization bodies which mechanisms to include for a first deployment of IVC security and privacy. Yellow marks topics

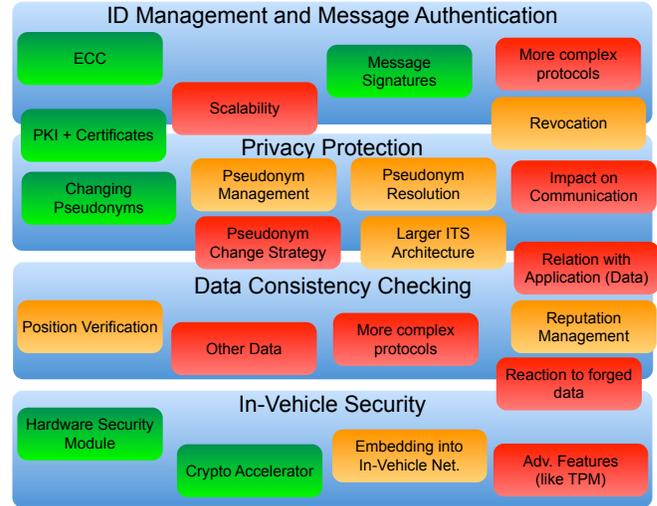


Fig. 3. Research Topics in IVC security and privacy

where there is a large variety of proposed security or privacy protection mechanisms in the literature but where a consensus on how to solve this problem is not yet reached. Topics in red color indicate issues that are still unsolved and where only few works are available so far.

An example of a topic where there is general agreement is the use of ECC-based asymmetric cryptography for message authentication and integrity protection using public-private key pairs and certificates issued by a PKI [11]. A matter of ongoing discussion is, however, how vehicles would communicate with the PKI for certificate renewal (which happens especially often whenever pseudonyms are employed): can a 3G connection be assumed to be present for this, or do more sporadic communication channels have to suffice?

One topic of particular importance is avoiding the overhead associated with secure broadcast communication and achieving scalable and efficient authentication of broadcast mechanisms. The ultimate goal of applying security mechanisms to IVC is to ensure correctness of communicated data. That is, no attacker should be able to disseminate forged data in the network. Ensuring trust and integrity of packets as achieved with a *'key-pair - certificate - signature'* solution is only one part of the solution, and one that comes at a very high overhead [12]. There are many proposed alternatives, some using symmetric instead of asymmetric cryptography [13], or hybrid solutions that use asymmetric or group cryptography only for distribution of symmetric keys. However, most of these solutions come with significant drawbacks and, therefore, the mainstream solution under discussion still relies on a *'key-pair - certificate - signature'* scheme.

During the working group sessions, the participants discussed additional ways of achieving efficient broadcast communication that require additional refinement and discussion after the seminar. Beyond the integrity and authenticity protection achieved by *'key-pair - certificate - signature'*, a further conclusion was that data consistency needs to be guaranteed by additional mechanisms that cross-validate data received from

various sources that an attacker cannot influence in parallel.

Overall, the discussions in the security working group provided a good overview on the current situation of security and privacy in IVC. While there is no complete solution and agreement in all matters, the participants concluded that the major questions to be solved are clear and that at least some are answered in a sufficient manner. The big challenge will be to find the right trade-off between strong security and privacy protection on the one hand and efficiency and low overhead on the other hand. If researchers and developers fail in either direction, this will inevitably lead to problems with either vulnerable or inefficient and unusable systems.

VI. IVC SIMULATION AND MODELING

This working group was bootstrapped by a joint invited talk given by Martin Treiber from TU Dresden and Christoph Sommer from the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg, concentrating on issues of traffic modeling and integrated simulation, respectively. Christoph Sommer was focusing on three central questions:

- How can the huge variety of different models (channel, traffic, driver, communication) be assembled into one consistent simulation?
- How can such simulations capture truly heterogeneous networks and scenarios?
- How can one abstract from fine-grained communication models to achieve scalable simulations that still provide accurate results?

While Christoph Sommer concentrated on communication models, Martin Treiber looked at the issue of traffic flow models and how they can be applied to evaluate congestion warning systems, traffic flow assistants, and traffic-light assistants. He stressed that traffic flow models are especially important for evaluating the accuracy and effects of traffic efficiency applications and showed how analytical information models can be tested against microsimulations and real trajectory data. For simulations done with low penetration rates, the comparison of results shows promising results, revealing only small discrepancies if road traffic microsimulation is tightly coupled with the network simulation [14], [15].

In the working group, the participants continued along this line of discussion and also looked into the complexity of models. General agreement was reached that complex models with too many input parameters, for example for radio channels, might not be too useful, as it might be hard to determine the right settings for those parameters.

As a cross-cutting aspects, both the Limits and the Simulation working groups questioned whether we already have the metrics to assess those limits. One aspect would be better channel models and to predict how future receivers would handle effects like Doppler-shift or multi-path propagation. Others would include evaluation metrics such as the CO₂ footprint or the impact of the human driver behavior. However, regarding analytical channel models, Hartenstein quoted Raj Jain stating *“In general, analytical modeling requires so many simplifications and assumptions that if the results turn out to be accurate, even the analysts are surprised”*. So a better

cross-validation of analysis, simulations, and measurements is needed to prove the validity of the models in different IVC situations.

The discussion in this working group focused mainly on questions related to the complexity of the used models that independently from each other achieved very accurate results. However, in combination, it is still unclear to what extent reality can be reproduced to evaluate qualitative and quantitative aspects of large scale IVC systems.

VII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Looking at the seminar as a whole, we think there are two important observations, one being more general and one more IVC-specific. The general observation, which has been validated in a countless number of these Dagstuhl seminars over the last years, is that to boost scientific creativity, there is no replacement for putting a bunch of enthusiastic researchers into a room, getting rid of disturbing factors, and letting them think and discuss.

More specific on the topic of IVC, it became clear that IVC is still a vibrant topic with many challenges ahead of us. At the same time, we are at a kind of turning point where a first generation of standards and products is designed and brought to market. Industry and many research projects now aim for very practical evaluation of IVC systems in field tests. For this to succeed and to provide meaningful results, our approach to evaluation needs to focus more on the application benefits of IVC and not only on network properties. In the end, the success of IVC will be measured in prevented accidents or reduced carbon emissions, not in packet delivery ratio. Looking at the recent literature, this change is already happening now, but work on better support in evaluation tools like simulators is clearly needed.

As far as the fundamental limits of inter-vehicle communication systems are concerned, we are facing the fact that current information and control theory are not suitable to be directly applied to those dynamic, de-centralized, and broadcast-based IVC systems. Working towards a better theoretical foundation for IVC could also benefit other areas which face similar challenges.

In terms of inter-vehicle communications principles and patterns, one lesson learned was to emphasize a cross-layer design approach whereby the developed communication protocols and applications are cognitive of the agile and challenging PHY layer conditions in vehicular networks. It was also observed that vehicle-to-vehicle communications can be used as a major enabler for providing radical improvements in mitigating congestion, reducing commute time of urban workers, supporting a greener environment, decreasing the carbon footprint of cars, and increasing productivity. To enable some of these solutions for large-scale transportation problems, new public policies or legislation at the governments level will be important for mandating DSRC technology. Given this outlook, another conclusion drawn was: in the initial stage of DSRC deployment, the communications and networking paradigms developed for different applications in vehicular ad hoc networks should utilize the existing mature cellular technologies such as 3G, LTE, LTE-A, etc.

Security and privacy still prove to provide a multitude of challenging questions. While research efforts have produced a constant progress, there is still a way to go before coming up with an exhaustive solution due to the fundamentally different nature of security and privacy challenges in IVC compared to traditional networks.

The accurate and realistic simulation and modeling of IVC protocols and applications is the basis for almost all developments in this area. As field tests are always limited in size and scope, basic research in IVC relies on analytical models and simulation. Much progress can be seen in various aspects such as the development of adequate mobility models, the use of more precise metrics besides classical networking aspects, and even in the modeling of non-technical parameters such as the human driver behavior. Yet, more insights are needed to study those aspects in a holistic way.

PARTICIPANTS

As organizers of such a seminar, we are completely dependent on the contributions and active participation of the seminar participants. We therefore want to express our sincere thanks to the participants of the Dagstuhl Seminar on Inter-Vehicular Communication. Due to their enthusiasm and hard work, we were able to provide this report outlining a lot of new insights and ideas.

Fundamental Limits of IVC were explored by Hannes Hartenstein, Geert Heijenk, Martin Mauve, Björn Scheuermann, and Lars Wolf. The Communication Patterns WG was composed of Claudio Casetti, Falko Dressler, Lars Eggert, Felix Schmidt-Eisenlohr, Jérôme Härri, Ozan Tonguz, and Lars Wischhof. Security and privacy issues were the focus of Levente Buttyan, David Eckhoff, Frank Kargl, Panagiotis Papadimitratos, and Elmar Schoch. The Simulation and Modeling group included Stefan Laemmer, Jens Mittag, Felix Schmidt-Eisenlohr, Jörg Ott, Christoph Sommer, and Martin Treiber.

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Falko Dressler (dressler@informatik.uni-erlangen.de) is a full professor of computer science at the University of Innsbruck. Dr. Dressler is an Editor for journals such as Elsevier Ad Hoc Networks, ACM/Springer Wireless Networks (WINET), and Elsevier Nano Communication Networks. Among other, Dr. Dressler wrote the textbooks *Self-Organization in Sensor and Actor Networks*, published by Wiley in 2007. Dr. Dressler is an IEEE Distinguished Lecturer in the fields of inter-vehicular communication, self-organization, and bio-inspired networking. Dr. Dressler is a Senior Member of the IEEE (COMSOC, CS, VTS) as well as a Senior Member of ACM (SIGMOBILE), and member of GI (KuVS). His research activities are focused on adaptive wireless networking and self-organization methods addressing issues in wireless ad hoc and sensor networks, inter-vehicular communication systems, bio-inspired networking, and adaptive network security techniques.



Frank Kargl (f.kargl@utwente.nl) is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente where he explores the security and privacy protection of mobile and dynamic networks with a special focus on automotive systems and inter-vehicle networks. He is involved in a variety of past and on-going research projects in this domain, including SeVeCom, PRECIOSA, and PRESERVE. Frank received his doctorate degree and habilitation from Ulm University where he worked until 2009. He is regularly involved in organization of conferences like ACM WiSec, IEEE WIVeC, or IEEE VNC and is a member of ACM, IEEE, and the German GI.



Jörg Ott (jo@netlab.tkk.fi) is professor for Networking Technologies in the Department of Communication and Networking (Comnet) at Aalto University, Finland. His research interests are in Internet technologies, protocol design, and protocol and system architectures, with one current research focus on communication in challenged networks and delay-tolerant networking. He holds a diploma in computer science (TU Berlin) and in industrial engineering (TFH Berlin), and received his Doctor in Engineering (Dr.-Ing.) from TU Berlin in 1997.

Jörg is member of ACM, IEEE, and GI, and has been an active contributor to Internet protocol engineering in the IETF and IRTF for some 15 years.



Ozan K. Tonguz (tonguz@ece.cmu.edu) is a tenured full professor in the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU), Pittsburgh, PA. He currently leads substantial research efforts at CMU in the broad areas of telecommunications and networking. He has published about 300 papers in IEEE journals and conference proceedings in the areas of wireless networking, optical communications, and computer networks. He is the author (with G. Ferrari) of the book *Ad Hoc Wireless Networks: A Communication-*

Theoretic Perspective (Wiley, 2006). His current research interests include vehicular ad hoc networks, wireless ad hoc and sensor networks, self-organizing networks, bioinformatics, and security. He currently serves or has served as a consultant or expert for several companies, major law firms, and government agencies in the United States, Europe, and Asia.



Lars Wischhof (wischhof@ieee.org) is a senior researcher at Audi Electronics Venture GmbH, Gaimersheim, Germany. Lars received his Ph.D. degree from the Department of Telecommunications at Hamburg University of Technology, where he worked until 2006. His current research interests include cellular communication, inter-vehicle communication, self-organizing networks, wireless packet scheduling and transport protocols for mobile communication. He is an active member of ACM, IEEE and VDE.